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NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

An Historical Interpretation of Philosophy. By JOHN BASCOM. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893. — pp. xiii, 518.

This book covers the whole field of philosophy from its first beginnings among the Greeks to the present time. The proportions of the work are : Part I, Ancient Philosophy, pp. 12–90 ; Part II, Mediaeval Philosophy, pp. 91–151 ; Part III, Modern Philosophy, pp. 152–518. From the preface, as well as from the title of the book, we might expect a treatment of the whole field of philosophy somewhat similar to that which Professor Royce has given us of one portion of it in the *Spirit of Modern Philosophy*. But the volume before us belongs to another generation, and is wholly different in spirit and method from that of Professor Royce. In spite of its title, the author appears to be almost destitute of historical appreciation. A remark which he makes incidentally, — “ how much philosophy is wearisome, groping its way among inquiries which awaken thought but are beyond its grasp ” (p. 173), — may well be taken as indicating Professor Bascom's attitude. For the book is chiefly occupied with the errors of philosophers, and the inconsistencies of philosophical systems. There is no attempt to place the systems criticised in their proper historical setting, or to estimate the part which the different ideas have played in the development of thought. Exposition is always subordinated to criticism, and there is a continual passage from one to the other that is very confusing. But worse, this mode of procedure oftentimes has resulted in giving an entirely false impression of the doctrines treated. ‘ Has the author,’ we are tempted to ask, ‘ ever read through the systems he undertakes to criticise ? ’ Besides this occasional unfairness or ignorance in exposition, Professor Bascom's criticism has defects both of form and temper which greatly detract from its force. Too often it consists in mere appeals to the language and modes of thought of ordinary life, in which rhetoric is made to do service for logic, and the ‘ philosophic temper ’ seems to be replaced by zeal in the defense of dogma.

In attempting to show grounds for these charges, I shall confine myself to that portion of the work which deals with Modern Philosophy. It is, perhaps, only fair to remark in passing that the treatment in Part I and Part II is much more objective, and therefore less open to criticism.

Professor Bascom lays down the principle that a sound philosophical temper “ must express itself not so much in the severity of logical processes as . . . in a reluctance to do violence to the facts ” (p. 205). . . . “ When a logical development of premises is bringing one's convictions straight against familiar facts in human life, it is only ruthless iconoclasm, that, in

the name of truth, holds on its way. Sound philosophy has the wisdom of timidity, regards the unfortunateness of a result as a probable disproof, and carefully reasons back to the deficiency or error contained in the data" (p. 206). . . . "If philosophy is pressing hard on long established and current opinion, it is doing so by virtue of some extreme premise or sophistical method and not simply by the reserved force of truth" (p. 207). Leaving out of consideration the question-begging character of the terms, "facts in human life," "error," and "deficiency," in the above quotations, I would point out, (1) that while a philosophical system may be inadequate because of its failure to *explain* facts, as a *theory* it can never be contradictory of them. Philosophy attempts to interpret facts by exhibiting their ultimate relations to all other facts, and its conclusions may conflict with our own naïve, uncritical convictions regarding the meaning of those facts. We are surely justified in holding that the final outcome of our thinking, what we cannot help believing in the end after attempting to see each part in the light of the whole, must be truer than our conception of the isolated fact from which we set out; (2) The conflict of any philosophical doctrine with "long established and current opinion" does not necessarily imply any deficiency or error in the data. "The unfortunateness of a result" has nothing to do with its truth or falsity. To refrain from drawing a conclusion which is forced upon us by reason is a piece of intellectual dishonesty. This argument has been used too long in the defense of dogma by those who feel that they are in some way or other responsible for the world.

The dangers to which such a position inevitably lead are well exemplified on almost every page of this book. I cannot refrain from quoting one or two passages. "In spite of all the ingenuities of language, in spite of all its confusions, the fundamental assertion of Spinoza flatly and extendedly [what *does* 'extendedly' mean?] contradicts experience, and so subverts the first terms of thought that are wrought into the entire framework of knowledge." "To identify extension and thought, matter and mind, as co-equal and co-eternal attributes of one substance, virtually wipes the board clean of all we have hitherto traced upon it, and leaves us to begin anew the problem of philosophy" (pp. 189, 190). . . . "The assertion that form-elements pertain to the mind and not to the things known, is made in opposition to universal conviction and so breaks down our just faith in our powers. No philosophy is at liberty to invalidate the normal action of the mind. The conclusion that knowledge is subjective in its forms is equally opposed to popular and scientific conviction. What is it in astronomy that we are measuring? Spaces, times, not dimensions of a mental form-element. How otherwise can we understand the exactitude and perfect agreement of these measurements?" (p. 388). As a further example of Professor Bascom's rhetoric, we may quote the following:—"It is playing fast and loose with the idea of space which enables the mind to entertain the notion of a spiritual monad and to assign it position in that portion of the brain without fibres; as if thereby there should be

found a centre for receiving and giving influences. This is the mere dizziness of thought. Speculation is brought to its knees by too heavy a blow of the sensuous mallet of mechanism" (p. 497).

As conspicuous examples of the inadequacy of the author's presentations we may instance his summary description of Locke's ethical theories (p. 211). (*Cf.* Sidgwick's *History of Ethics* and Curtis's *Outline of Locke's Ethical Philosophy*.) In a chapter on the English ethical writers who dissent from Utilitarianism, he informs us that Bishop Butler's work of widest influence was the *Analogy*, and does not even mention the *Sermons on Human Nature*. On page 432 we are told that "Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797) was the first of the German Idealists." One would gladly believe that this is a mere slip of the pen. It must, however, be noticed that the author has not merely confused the christian name of the elder Fichte with that of his son, but that there is also a substitution of dates which renders the mistake incomprehensible. The same confusion of son and father occurs also in the table of contents.

The position from which Professor Bascom criticises is that of naïve representationism, or doctrine of mediate perception, which, however, he dignifies with the name of 'Constructive Realism.' This is most clearly stated in his criticism of the Scottish School. "Our experiences are purely personal experiences referrible under causation to the properties of objects external to the mind. . . . Properties and object are an inference from sensation" (p. 295). "Nothing which is not phenomenal to mind can be embraced within consciousness; all direct knowledge is so embraced. If the object to which I refer a group of sensations were directly known, it would be a phenomenon of mind. It remains to be inferred because it is exterior to mind, not a part of its own experience" (p. 296). "All that is known directly is thereby shown to be phenomenal, all that is known indirectly is transcendent, unphenomenal" (p. 297). This, surely, is the very doctrine that Reid abandoned because Hume had shown once for all that if we start with sensations it is impossible to pass to the existence of external bodies. Professor Bascom regards the assertions of the Scottish school in reference to an immediate apprehension of things, and to the distinction between subject and object, as a special deliverance of the Scottish consciousness, and declares that they are "made in the face of almost all philosophy materialistic, idealistic, and intuitive" (p. 315). Is not just the opposite the fact, that this analysis of the testimony of consciousness is at the present day accepted by all psychologists and by every school of philosophy? The psychology of Reid is indisputable; it was because he had not completely freed himself from 'the doctrine of ideas' that he relapsed into dualism.—In criticising Kant's distinction of phenomena and noumena, our author occupies an entirely different position. "We know matter, mind," he tells us, "fully and finally in knowing the phenomena to which they give rise. There is not a residuum of being beyond these manifestations. It is that we may explain these phenomena, and for this

purpose only, that we accept these causes. . . . Things-in-themselves are the merest chimeras, taken up on no ground whatever. Never have any terms more extraneous and fanciful found their way into philosophy" (p. 390). These sentences seem to me to contain contradictions in themselves, and they certainly are in direct opposition to the doctrine of mediate perception stated above.

There are many other points in this volume which invite criticism, but I have only space to refer briefly to one or two. "Idealism," he tells us, "obedient to the impulse given in this direction by Kant . . . was carried rapidly forward to its most complete and elaborate expression by three brilliant thinkers, working one vein of thought in close dependence on each other" (p. 427). And yet, a little later, he condemns idealism "because there is no continuity in its successive stages, no conquered territory in its several positions" (p. 454). After the previous statement, how can the criticism apply? Here is another statement that passes comprehension: "Constructive realism asserts with idealism the prior comprehensive quality of fundamental ideas, but it avoids that illusion of idealism, things-in-themselves, the uncertain shadows of transcendental notions which serve only to perplex and confuse our vision" (p. 509).

This book is interesting, and at the same time humiliating, because it represents what was taught less than a generation ago in so many colleges of our country under the name of philosophy. J. E. C.

History of Modern Philosophy, from Nicolas of Cusa to the Present Time. By RICHARD FALCKENBERG, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Erlangen. First American from the second German edition. Translated with the author's sanction by A. C. ARMSTRONG, JR., Professor of Philosophy in Wesleyan University. New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1893.—pp. xv, 655.

Teachers of philosophy have long felt the need of a good text-book of the history of modern philosophy. A manual was desired that might serve as a counterpart to Zeller's masterly *Grundriss zur Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie*. By publishing his *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* in 1886 (second edition in 1892), Professor Falckenberg satisfactorily supplied the want, and placed in the hands of German students, at least, a compendium excellently adapted to the needs of the beginner. In this treatise he gives a clear and accurate exposition of the essential thoughts of the different philosophical systems, beginning with Nicolas of Cusa, and traces the course of their historical development. Mention is also made in the text of the chief works of the philosophers under consideration as well as of the more important and more modern treatises concerning them. In this way the student receives a choice bibliography without being overwhelmed with the titles of books most of which are